

The Upland Solutions Project Final Report

A report by Scotland's Moorland Forum

Based on workshops and information collected from Study Areas at
Muirkirk, East Ayrshire and Tomatin, Inverness-shire



c/o The Heather Trust, Newtonrigg, Holywood, DUMFRIES DG2 0RA

web site: www.moorlandforum.org.uk e-mail: info@moorlandforum.org.uk

Tel: 01387 723201

Chairman: Lord Lindsay

Director: Simon Thorp

Administrator: Anne Stoddart

Scotland's Moorland Forum

Member Organisations

Association of Deer Management Groups
Association of Salmon Fishery Boards
British Association for Shooting & Conservation, Scotland
British Deer Society
British Trust for Ornithology, Scotland
Cairngorms National Park Authority
Centre for Ecology & Hydrology
Crofters Commission
Deer Commission Scotland (until September 2010)
Forestry Commission Scotland
Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust
Game Conservancy Scottish Research Trustees
Heather Trust
Highland Birchwoods (until 6 July 2011)
James Hutton Institute (from 1 April 2011)
John Muir Trust
Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park Authority
Macaulay Institute (until 31 March 2011)
National Farmers Union Scotland
National Trust for Scotland
Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds Scotland
Rural Directorate, Scottish Government
Scottish Agricultural College
Scottish Association of Countryside Sports
Scottish Countryside Alliance
Scottish Environmental Protection Agency
Scottish Estates Business Group (until June 2011)
Scottish Gamekeepers Association
Scottish Land & Estates (from June 2011)
Scottish Natural Heritage
Scottish Raptor Study Groups
Scottish Rural Property & Business Association (until June 2011)
Scottish Water (from October 2010)
Scottish Wildlife Trust

Upland Solutions Project Final Report

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| <i>Member Organisations</i> | 1 |
| <i>Appendices</i> | 3 |
| <i>Supplements (available in the Supplementary Report)</i> | 3 |
| <i>Minister's Foreword</i> | 4 |
| <i>Chairman's Introduction</i> | 5 |
| <i>Context</i> | 7 |
| <i>Disclaimer</i> | 7 |
| <i>Supplementary Information</i> | 7 |
| <i>Executive Summary</i> | 8 |
| <i>Introduction</i> | 13 |
| 1 <i>Scotland's Moorland Forum</i> | 13 |
| 2 <i>Upland Solutions</i> | 13 |
| 3 <i>Project Method</i> | 14 |
| 4 <i>Other Initiatives</i> | 14 |
| <i>Views from the Workshops</i> | 15 |
| 5 <i>General</i> | 15 |
| <i>Muirkirk</i> | 15 |
| 6 <i>Study Area Features</i> | 15 |
| 7 <i>The Workshop</i> | 16 |
| <i>Muirkirk: local views</i> | 16 |
| 8 <i>Upland Birds</i> | 16 |
| 9 <i>Carbon</i> | 18 |
| 10 <i>Upland Economics</i> | 18 |
| 11 <i>Feedback from the Community Council</i> | 20 |
| <i>Tomatin</i> | 21 |
| 12 <i>Study Area Features</i> | 21 |
| 13 <i>The Workshop</i> | 21 |
| <i>Tomatin: Local Views</i> | 22 |
| 14 <i>Upland Birds</i> | 22 |
| 15 <i>Carbon</i> | 23 |
| 16 <i>Upland Economics</i> | 24 |
| 17 <i>Feedback from the Community Council</i> | 26 |
| <i>Upland Solutions - the Forum's Proposals</i> | 27 |
| 18 <i>Introduction</i> | 27 |
| 19 <i>Area Development Plan</i> | 27 |
| 20 <i>Grouse Shooting</i> | 28 |
| 21 <i>Ravens and Buzzards</i> | 28 |
| 22 <i>Persecution</i> | 29 |
| 23 <i>Muirkirk – Designation of the SSSI & SPA</i> | 29 |
| 24 <i>Carbon</i> | 30 |
| 25 <i>Regulation</i> | 30 |
| 26 <i>Upland management</i> | 30 |

| | | |
|----|--|----|
| 27 | <i>Cohesion and Communications</i> | 31 |
| 28 | <i>Agriculture and Food</i> | 31 |
| 29 | <i>Housing</i> | 32 |
| 30 | <i>Specific Guidance</i> | 32 |
| | <i>Recommendations</i> | 32 |
| 31 | <i>Main Recommendations</i> | 32 |
| 32 | <i>Develop a Moorland Forum Task Force</i> | 33 |
| | <i>References</i> | 33 |

Appendices

- 1 Project Delivery Method
- 2 Study Area Maps
- 3 Tick Control example
- 4 Other Initiatives

Supplements (available in the Supplementary Report)

- 1 Five Key Issues for Consideration by Strand Teams
- 2 Membership of Strand Teams
- 3 Summary of Strand Questions
- 4 Example Strand Questionnaire
- 5 Individual Questionnaire
- 6 Project process: Summary Diagram
- 7 Flyer for the Muirkirk workshop



Minister's Foreword

I value the findings of this report, which has captured the views of people who live and work in parts of the Scottish uplands. The members of Scotland's Moorland Forum are to be congratulated for applying their knowledge and experience in this novel way. While the views that have been recorded are drawn exclusively from two large-scale study areas, they nonetheless provide important pointers to the perceptions at ground-level of communities and people elsewhere in upland Scotland. Their future livelihood and welfare will depend to a large extent on their ability to seize opportunities and overcome challenges. It is therefore essential that we understand their perceptions of what they need to achieve a secure, sustainable and resilient future. The views recorded in this report need to feed into the way that we support and regulate the upland areas of Scotland and we will work with the Moorland Forum to achieve this.

I look forward to hearing more about the conclusions that the Moorland Forum draws from this work and the recommendations about how the lessons arising from the project could be taken forward.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stewart Stevenson'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Stewart Stevenson, MSP
Minister for Environment and Climate Change
Scottish Government

Chairman's Introduction



The two-year Upland Solutions project deliberately set out to understand the uplands through the eyes of those who live and work in them. We wanted to capture how those at ground-level see the opportunities and challenges that they face on a daily basis. We wanted to explore how they see those opportunities and challenges impacting on the future livelihood of their jobs, families, communities and surrounding landscapes. We wanted their views on where systems are working well and delivering secure and sustainable opportunities. At the same time, we wanted to understand where those at the sharp-end feel that their aspirations for the future are being frustrated by barriers, constraints or uncertainty.

An Interim Report from the project was published in December 2010. Since then, members of the Forum have given further consideration to the findings of the project and there has been additional feedback from the two Study Areas. These further thoughts have been included in this final version of the Report.

This Report is about what real people think. It provides a solid evidence base of ground-level experience and perspectives. It will help inform those who are devising or delivering policies and regulations that affect the future of the uplands and the people who live and work in them. It will also usefully complement and contrast with the more institutionalised and generic analysis that is often the principal source of information. These were amongst the reasons that prompted both Scottish Natural Heritage and Ministers to give their positive endorsement to the proposal that the Moorland Forum should undertake the Upland Solutions project.

Having approved the initiative, the Moorland Forum invested considerable time and effort in selecting two large-scale, contrasting project areas and ensuring that the local engagement process on the ground would be open to all, inclusive and thorough. We also determined from the start that at each level of the project's management there should be a balance between the various interests involved. The Forum is uniquely placed in being able to address upland issues in this way given the experience, expertise and cross-sectoral diversity of principal interests amongst its 32 member organisations.

This Report is largely a record of how life is seen at ground-level by real people. Whilst some of the issues raised in the evidence require further consultation, which is currently in progress, a number of preliminary conclusions can be drawn. There is a need for better integration between the people who live and work in the uplands and those from elsewhere whose role or duties impact on the uplands. Similarly, there is a need for better integration and a more joined-up approach between the various agencies and organisations, both governmental and non-governmental, that provide support and advice in the uplands. There is also a need to address tensions stemming from a number of specific issues, such as: raptor persecution, renewables, the constraints imposed on land management, the need to optimise the benefits of public funds, the impact of designated areas, and housing. The further consideration that is

underway of lessons that can be learned from the evidence gained will help inform how this is best done.

One of the proposals to come out of this report is that better integration and outcomes can be achieved if a local development plan involving all the different interests could be developed for each area. The dialogue involved in such a process would also provide an opportunity for different interests to collaborate more closely and this in turn would likely enable specific concerns or tensions to be more effectively addressed.

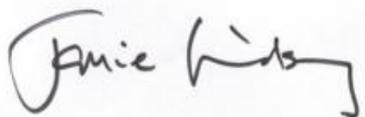
Independently of this project, the Regulatory Review Group was carrying out a study of the planning processes associated with the proposed replacement of the opencast coal mine at Powharnal, not far from Muirkirk. The findings of this study are relevant to the Upland Solutions project in that the study assessed how communities and developers could be brought together by an external, independent group to achieve better understanding of each other's needs and aspirations. Some details about this work have been included in Appendix 4.

Our Uplands Solutions initiative could not hope to have covered the entirety of the Scottish uplands and all its diverse communities and circumstances. As a detailed snapshot across two contrasting and large-scale areas, however, it provides a valuable body of first-hand feedback and evidence that will be relevant to all upland interests – and to all with an interest in the future of the uplands. It also provides a valuable reality and health-check to the Scottish Government, its agencies and other organisations whose engagement with the uplands tends necessarily to be driven by top-down perspectives.

Our Report lays down a number of challenges. For those whose life and work are in the uplands, there are pointers as to how bottom-up solutions, initiative and leadership can realise aspirations and deliver opportunities. For the Scottish Government and its various agencies, there are pointers about how policies and regulations are seen at ground-level, where they enable, where they constrain, and how they might be more effectively delivered in the future. For all, there are clear messages about the need for improved dialogue, collaboration and integration, both at every level and between every level.

The Moorland Forum intends actively promoting the lessons arising from this Report and further consideration of the evidence involving all who have been involved in this project. Upland Solutions provides a unique platform, based on the views of real people, from which we can encourage and support a wide range of players, from local communities to government ministers and their officials, in their efforts to deliver a strong, secure and sustainable future for all those who live in the uplands as well as for the uplands themselves.

I commend the findings of this project to the Scottish Government, the Government's agencies, the people in the Study Areas at Muirkirk and Tomatin, and to all with an interest in the Scottish uplands.



Jamie Lindsay
Chairman

Context

When the Upland Solutions project was discussed with the Minister for Environment, with representatives from the Scottish Government and with senior members of Scottish Natural Heritage, it was made clear that the aim was to integrate this work with other initiatives taking place in Scotland.

The development of the **Land Use Strategy** (Scottish Government, 2011) provided an opportunity for the Moorland Forum to use the findings from this project to influence future policy for the uplands of Scotland. The work of the project fits well with the aim of the Land Use Strategy ‘to focus government and public services on creating a more successful country, with opportunities for all of Scotland to flourish, through increasing sustainable economic growth’ and the vision to achieve ‘a prosperous and sustainable low-carbon economy, underpinned by successful land-based businesses, flourishing natural environments and vibrant communities.’

The **Speak up for Scotland** report (Scottish Rural Development Council, 2010) is also relevant to this project and the view expressed that ‘It is the people of rural Scotland who will deliver our vision and we are promoting a range of actions that will enable the best use of their talents and unlock the enterprise found so widely across the Country.’ The report makes a further point that is at the heart of the Upland Solutions project: ‘We realise that this will mean a change of approach from government at all levels, looking at existing policies, making better connections, and encouraging added value from individuals and enterprises.’

Defra published a report in September 2010, **Making Space for Nature** (The Lawton Review) (Lawton, J.H. *et al*, 2010), that suggested a step change in nature conservation was needed in England. Arguably, the situation is similar in Scotland. Of direct relevance to Muirkirk, the report pointed out that, ‘Designation is not an end in itself. Management of these areas must be allowed to continue if the features of interest are to be maintained in their existing condition. If management is changed, or removed as in the example quoted in the report, the balance between the different species will change, often for the worse.’

Disclaimer

This Report reflects a general consensus of the members of the Moorland Forum but acknowledges that member organisations may have their own views, which are not necessarily those of the Forum.

Supplementary Information

For simplicity, this Report does not include all the data about the development of the project or details of the forms that were used during the workshops. Additional information is available in a Supplementary Report that can be viewed on the Moorland Forum’s website www.moorlandforum.org.uk.

Executive Summary

- 1 During 2010, Scotland's Moorland Forum, with its broad range of expertise in the land management and policy sectors, investigated two different and contrasting areas of Scotland to establish what was working well and what changes, if any, were needed if the areas were to fulfil their potential.
- 2 The two areas selected were an area surrounding Muirkirk in East Ayrshire and the area to the south-west of Tomatin in Inverness-shire. See the Map at [Appendix 2](#).
- 3 There are two outputs from this work:
 - 3.1 A distillation of the views of local people obtained through two workshops, supplemented by the responses local people provided to individual questionnaires; and
 - 3.2 In keeping with the title of the Project, the Forum has proposed some **Upland Solutions** to the most significant **Upland Barriers** that were identified during the workshops (Sections 18 – 30).
- 4 The structure of the report has endeavoured to make it clear where the views of local people have been reported and where the Forum has proposed solutions to the issues that have been identified.



THE MUIRKIRK

BARRIERS

- 5 **Upland Barriers:** the five most significant findings from this work that were thought by people in both Study Areas to be preventing progress were:

| Barrier | Solution in Section 7 |
|--|---|
| The lack of a shared vision or objectives for the future of these areas; | Local development plan |
| Poor communication and coordination between Government Agencies and NGOs with local landowners and communities at ground level; | Upland Management Specific Guidance |
| Bureaucracy and risk-averse regulation; | Regulation |
| The lack of understanding of the government's imperative to manage carbon; and | Carbon |
| Raptor persecution sours the relationships between key stakeholders; in some areas this restricts the level of agency / NGO input and limits private investment. | Specific Guidance Persecution Cohesion & Communication |

6 Area Specific Upland Barriers:

Muirkirk

| Barrier | Solution in Section 7 |
|--|--|
| There is limited connection between the local community and the upland areas that surround them; | Area development plan Cohesion & communication |
| The income to the area from sources other than sporting & farming enterprises (e.g. renewables, open cast coal, SRDP) appears to produce little obvious local benefit; | Upland Management Agriculture, food & forestry |
| There is little engagement with the private sector to attract inward investment for the management of the area, (other than for the open cast or windfarm sites); and | Upland management |
| Some people see designated sites as a burden on the area. | Muirkirk designation |

Tomatin

| Barrier | Solution in Section 7 |
|--|---|
| <p>Communication between estates and the local community is not as good as it could be;</p> <p>Concerns were expressed about the process for allocating the payment to the community from the local windfarm and it might help to reduce any local difficulties if this process were reviewed; and</p> <p>The income earned locally is very dependent on the driven grouse enterprises, which has a tendency to fluctuate.</p> | <p>Area development plan Cohesion & communication</p> <p>Area development plan Cohesion & communication</p> <p>Upland Management Agriculture, food & forestry</p> |

SOLUTIONS

7 Upland Solutions: a Summary of the Forum's Views

See paragraphs 16 – 28 for further details.

(If viewing the Report on a computer, the links will aid navigation around the report – there is often a return link.)

| Issue | Action |
|--|--|
| <p>Area development plan</p> | <p>As a method of identifying where progress might be made, some form of area development plan could be drawn up for both study areas.</p> <p>The plan should capture the aspirations of the whole community for the future of the area.</p> |
| <p><i>Upland Birds:</i> Grouse shooting</p> <p>Ravens & Buzzards</p> | <p>The re-establishment of grouse shooting at Muirkirk should be considered; an assessment should be made of the management changes that would be required and the associated costs, risks and benefits to introduce driven and / or walked up shooting.</p> <p>Support the on-going discussions taking place between landowners and SNH about the issuing of licences for the control of Ravens. If the criteria for granting a licence can be met, the control of predation pressure would remove a perceived driver of illegal practices.</p> |

| | |
|--|--|
| <u>Persecution</u> | Everyone involved in upland management in the Study Areas should work towards stamping out persecution so that this barrier to progress no longer exists. |
| <u>Muirkirk – designation</u> | Review the designation. Confirm that bird populations are falling short of expectations and that the management obligations imposed by the designation are being carried out. If appropriate, initiate an investigation into the reasons for the failure to meet expectations. |
| <u>Carbon</u> | Provide information to land managers about carbon stores, carbon cycles and best practice management for carbon conservation. |
| <u>Regulation</u> | Investigate the concerns that ‘red tape’ was seen to be restricting local initiatives. Consider how the development plan concept might help, for example by improving local collaboration. |
| <u>Upland management</u> | The public and private sector should be encouraged to work more closely together. Innovation and a willingness to remove barriers must be developed. If public benefit can be demonstrated, the SRDP should provide support for predator and tick control schemes. |
| <u>Cohesion and Communication</u> | There is a lack of consensus on many issues addressed by this project. The proposed area development plan should be used as a catalyst for integration and improved communications between all parts of the community. |
| <u>Agriculture, Food & Forestry:</u> Economic benefits | Agriculture’s potential role in managing and improving the habitat condition needs to be emphasised in addition to being a source of locally produced food and a provider of local employment. |
| Forestry | If in-keeping with the requirements of the SSSI designation, consider an increase in the amount of woodland to provide a further boost to the local economy. This could be considered as part of the area development plan. Natural regeneration would be encouraged where possible. |

| | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| <p><u>Housing</u></p> | <p>The provision of housing in both areas should be reviewed to ensure that this is not a limiting factor on local initiative.</p> <p>The planning system needs to enable and not restrict the provision of the local rural housing that is needed to underpin economic activity.</p> |
| <p><u>Specific Guidance</u></p> | <p>Guidance should be prepared and distributed to fill the identified gaps.</p> |

Introduction

1 Scotland's Moorland Forum

- 1.1 The Forum was established in 2002 to provide an opportunity for a diverse range of organisations to come together to discuss issues that affect the management of Scotland's moorland and upland areas. 24 organisations founded the Forum and membership now stands at 32. A list of members is on page 1.
- 1.2 Lord Lindsay has been the independent chairman of the Forum, since November 2007.

2 Upland Solutions

- 2.1 The concept for this project was developed in late 2008, and Lord Lindsay discussed it with, amongst others, the Minister for Environment and senior members of Scottish Natural Heritage, in early 2009. The concept was developed further through discussion with members of the Forum during 2009 and workshops were held in the two study areas, in early 2010.
- 2.2 The Members of the Forum represent cross-sector interests in the moorland and upland areas of Scotland, and the proposal was for the Forum to apply this experience to the investigation of two contrasting, study areas. Different approaches to similar problems were anticipated and the aim was to identify the best solutions, to allow a form of 'template for success' to be developed.
- 2.3 The project obtained the views of landowners, land-managers, local communities and other key people with an interest in the management of the uplands in the two study areas.
- 2.4 The aim was to consider management issues at ground level to identify approaches that were working well and to identify practical solutions to any problems that were encountered.
- 2.5 To give focus to the work, the project covered three themes: upland birds, carbon and upland economics.
- 2.6 The project sought to identify and understand where there were barriers (institutional, regulatory, etc.) to what might otherwise be practical solutions.
- 2.7 It was recognised that each area of Scotland has its unique potential and its unique constraints, but if one area was found to be prospering while another was not, it would act as an incentive for re-evaluation and change. In view of the differences between areas, the lessons learned in one area cannot necessarily be applied directly in another area, but the general principles could be translocated usefully.

- 2.8 This work was carried out with the support of the Forum's members using member's resources only. The contributions to the cost of staging the workshops received from: SRPBA, Scottish Countryside Alliance, BASC Scotland, Forestry Commission Scotland, John Muir Trust, RSPB Scotland, and Scottish Natural Heritage are gratefully acknowledged.
- 2.9 The Forum is not an implementation agency, and while the Forum will be happy to be consulted about this work, the Scottish Government is asked to encourage relevant agencies to consider how the proposed 'solutions' might be implemented.

3 Project Method

- 3.1 The details of the method adopted by the Forum to deliver this project are contained in [Appendix 1](#).

4 Other Initiatives

- 4.1 Details of the work carried out by the CADISPA Trust and the Regulatory Review Group in or close to the two Study areas are covered in [Appendix 4](#).



The Workshop at

Views from the Workshops

5 General

- 5.1 It must be emphasised that these views are those obtained from people who attended the workshops or completed the questionnaires. No attempt has been made to verify any of the comments, or to remove any inconsistencies.
- 5.2 Direct quotes recorded during the workshops or from the questionnaires are reported in *bold italics*.
- 5.3 The views from the workshops are reported under the three strand headings: **Upland Birds, Carbon, and Upland Economics**.
- 5.4 These views are assembled in the ‘**Local Views**’ section for each study area below and some conclusions that are drawn from these views are reported in the ‘**Upland Solutions**’ section.

Muirkirk

6 Study Area Features

- 6.1 The map at [Appendix 2](#) shows the location and boundary of the Study Area.
- 6.2 The main centre of the community is Muirkirk itself. There is a range of rural land uses in the area with the emphasis on sheep grazing (although numbers have been much reduced in recent years); commercial forestry, in public & private ownership; and there are several open cast coal mines within, or close to, the area. Although a significant feature of the area until recently, driven grouse shooting has declined markedly in recent years and is now virtually non-existent.
- 6.3 The study area included two upland areas to the north and south of Muirkirk. Much of the upland areas are designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and upland habitats within the site consist of heather dominated moorland, acid grassland and blanket bog.
- 6.4 Airs Moss is an area of low-lying blanket bog situated between the two upland areas, and as a result of the importance of blanket bog, the moss has been designated under EU legislation as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC).
- 6.5 This range of habitats would be expected to support a diverse range of moorland birds, notably including hen harrier and short-eared owl. Other bird species that have been recorded include: peregrine, merlin, buzzard, red and black grouse, dunlin, snipe, lapwing, curlew, whinchat, stonechat, wheatear and ring ouzel. Raptor populations in the Muirkirk area have suffered a history of illegal persecution, but it should be noted that there is little or no upland management taking place at present.

7 The Workshop

- 7.1 The workshop was held at the Lochside Hotel near New Cumnock on 25th February 2010.
- 7.2 A breakdown by category of those who attended, or wanted to attend, is:

| Category | Total |
|------------------|-------|
| Agency | 5 |
| Conservation | 8 |
| Corporate | 2 |
| Farmer | 8 |
| Land management | 16 |
| Local Government | 3 |
| Local Resident | 7 |
| Moorland Forum | 10 |
| NGO | 3 |
| Research | 1 |
| Grand Total | 63 |

Muirkirk: local views

8 Upland Birds

- 8.1 All upland bird populations, with the exception of magpies and crows, were thought to have collapsed since the 1980s. This had reduced the income from grouse shooting into the area to a fraction of the former figure and employment had suffered accordingly. The number of grouse moors had crashed from six to one and where there had been 10 full-time gamekeepers employed in the area, there was now only one.
- 8.2 Birdwatchers were thought to provide local benefits through their demand for accommodation, but this was at odds with the belief that the populations of many, if not all, of the rare species were declining rapidly. There were also concerns that *birdwatching is hampered by a lack of facilities and no cohesion*.
- 8.3 More encouragement should be given to gamekeepers to carry out active management. If this resulted in an increase in the grouse population it was likely that the economy of the area would follow the same trend.
- 8.4 One former owner of a moor within the Study Area commented that he felt forced to sell following the designation of the area as an SSSI. He had not been able to carry out legal control of predators due to the intense, external monitoring pressure. This had contributed to a decline in the income from grouse shooting that had made the estate uneconomic.
- 8.5 The local view was that the numbers of predatory birds (particularly magpies and crows) had increased while all other species were declining. This could be linked to the decline in the number of gamekeepers. During the workshop, it was clear that the decline was thought to affect not just game birds but all ground nesting birds - protected species, as well as others. It was suggested that a better balance between birds of prey and other species was required.

- 8.6 A contrary view was also expressed by one respondent that *raptors breed better on unkept ground where there is no persecution*.
- 8.7 It was suggested that *forestry managers carry out little or no predator control* and this was seen as a contributory factor to the increase of avian predators. It was suggested that *the area would benefit from a well-organised vermin (predator) control scheme*.
- 8.8 A reduction in the amount of heather in the study area was seen as a contributory factor in the decline of moorland specialist bird species. The loss of heather was attributed to a reduction of management by grazing (leading to increased competition from grasses) and muirburn, open cast mining and attacks by heather beetle. It was suggested that more research was required into the drivers of heather beetle and the best management before and after an outbreak. The re-vegetation of restored ground after open cast mining was seen as an opportunity to increase heather cover; more effort should be made to ensure that such land is reinstated as heather and not as grass.
- 8.9 The designation of the area as a Site of Special Scientific interest (SSSI) and Special Protection Area (under the EU Birds Directive) came in for a large amount of criticism: *The designation is linked to birds, even though they are not there anymore*. It was suggested that *the SPA is protected but it is not special*.
- 8.10 The management of the area came under criticism with the view being expressed that *problem solving is a lot of talk and no action*. It was suggested that there was *too much external interference* and that it would be *better to rely on land managers*. Cross compliance was seen to have a negative effect: *it is possible to manage within the law, but not within the requirements of cross compliance*.
- 8.11 Concern was expressed that *entrenched viewpoints restrict effective joint working*. *Improved communication between user groups* was required to promote better understanding of different roles. The Scottish Government and the Police have proposed a Raptor Action Group for the Muirkirk area but it was not clear if this would be effective.
- 8.12 Several issues were raised in response to the question that asked for more information:
- 8.12.1 More information about the damage caused to livestock and upland bird species by Ravens and Buzzards should be obtained.
 - 8.12.2 More information about how to restore heather was required.
 - 8.12.3 Better use should be made of local knowledge.

9 Carbon

- 9.1 It was obvious that the *value of carbon is unclear and there are no incentives to make it important*. There was thought to be a low level of public awareness of carbon issues and throughout the discussion delegates felt that they needed *more information to make decisions*. In particular farmers needed more information about how *farm practices can be adapted to be more carbon efficient*.
- 9.2 There was scepticism about the importance of storage of carbon; *it might be better to focus on controlling emissions*. There was concern that *if experts do not agree, how can laymen understand the issues*.
- 9.3 Others recognised that carbon could mean more jobs and that *carbon trading might offer an opportunity as a new source of income to the uplands*.
- 9.4 Well-managed moorland was recognised to produce *more birds, employment and less chance of wildfires*. However, it was suggested that *management needs to be active to get the best balance*.
- 9.5 There was concern about the expansion of trees as this introduced *a major and permanent change of use*.
- 9.6 A general comment was made as part of the discussion about re-wetting: *a careful approach was needed, as damage can never be undone*.
- 9.7 Improving management of carbon in the uplands could be achieved by:
- 9.7.1 Having more information available about the best forms of land management for carbon.
- 9.7.2 Allowing local people to have input into policy formation

10 Upland Economics

- 10.1 Open cast mining is a large employer in the area, and it was credited with keeping local shops in business, but the employment boost was offset by the reduction in employment resulting from the contraction of grouse shooting since the 1980s. This had affected both full-time and casual employment. There was only one keeper left from 10 and only one active grouse moor, down from six.
- 10.2 There was a lack of understanding about why *estates will not invest to produce more grouse*.
- 10.3 A big reduction in sheep numbers had also reduced employment of shepherds and those that remained were *having to do the work of five men*. Generally, there was a shortage of employment in the area with the result that *people have to travel to find work*. The increase in the area of woodland had not helped local levels of employment as *forestry uses imported labour*. A balancing view was expressed that the reduction in stock numbers has *improved stock health and increased heather cover*.

- 10.4 It was thought that there was not enough money or investment in the area and it was recognised that *a relationship between public and private money was important.*
- 10.5 There was concern that *regulation is skewing the effort needed to get things done.*
- 10.6 The designation of the SSSI again came in for comment with a view expressed that the *SPA designation is bad for local economics and causes landowners to lose enthusiasm and give up.* The restrictions associated with the SPA were thought to provide a *disincentive for landowners to do anything* and the designation was thought to have *killed economic opportunity in the area.* The perception was that a designated area *means that nothing will be allowed to happen.* A designated area *must be seen as an area where opportunities can be allowed to flourish.*
- 10.7 A bright spot was that Black grouse were thought to be increasing in the area.
- 10.8 The lack of certainty of agricultural support was seen as a further disincentive to investment.
- 10.9 There were concerns that money was being wasted on silly projects and a general view that *funding from wind farms and open cast mining was not being invested in the local area.*
- 10.10 There was some support for the Galloway Forest Park Biosphere Project as this *could introduce opportunities if extended to Muirkirk.*
- 10.11 The proximity of the railway was seen as a possible asset and it was thought that better use could be made of this.
- 10.12 The planning system was thought to be restricting the potential for residential development.
- 10.13 In spite of the concerns about the management of the moorland the community was doing well. *Locals take pride in the area and there are 47 active groups.*
- 10.14 The local Farmers Market was thought to be working well.
- 10.15 When asked how the local economy could be improved a range of suggestions were made:
- 10.15.1 Local people, not NGOs, must look for solutions, reinforcing the point that less external interference would be beneficial.
- 10.15.2 More management to create an economic return in the upland areas is required with more gamekeepers and shepherds.
- 10.15.3 An economic impact assessment should be carried out in advance of designations.

10.15.4 Stocking the area with low quality non-breeding livestock should not be accepted.

10.15.5 Make more of the local assets: tourism, windfarm, the railway, open cast mining and grouse shooting.

10.15.6 The Land Use Strategy should take account of food production & food security.

10.15.7 The community should buy or invest in a windfarm.

11 Feedback from the Community Council

11.1 The Muirkirk Community Council provided some feedback on the draft Interim report that expressed their concerns about access. The Council believes that a lack of management in the area is preventing easy access along many of access routes in the area. This makes the area less attractive to walkers and reduces the financial income from such visits.

Tomatin

12 Study Area Features

- 12.1 The map at [Appendix 2](#) shows the location and boundary of the Study Area.
- 12.2 The main centre is at Tomatin where the Tomatin Distillery provides employment. Communications in the area are boosted by the proximity to the A9 which makes it possible to travel to Inverness in about 20 minutes from Tomatin.
- 12.3 The majority of the area forms part of large estates, for which the main enterprise is grouse shooting, supported by deer stalking.
- 12.4 The Study Area covered the Upper Findhorn glen with high ground to the north and south of the river.
- 12.5 There was considerable wind farm interest in the area, although the only operational wind farm at the time of the workshop was on the Farr Estate.
- 12.6 No part of the study area was a designated site but a diverse range of moorland birds could again be expected, possibly including golden eagle. However, there are no breeding pairs of golden eagle or hen harrier in the study area, in spite of the habitat being suitable for them.
- 12.7 The area is popular with birdwatchers that come to see ring ouzels and other upland bird species. Raptor populations in the area have suffered a history of illegal persecution.

13 The Workshop

- 13.1 The workshop was held at the Tomatin Country Inn on 4th March. Snow was hampering travel but a good turn-out was achieved nonetheless.
- 13.2 A breakdown by category of those who attended, or wanted to attend, is:

| Category | Total |
|-----------------|-------|
| Agency | 3 |
| Conservation | 8 |
| Farmer | 6 |
| Land management | 24 |
| Local Resident | 1 |
| Moorland Forum | 12 |
| NGO | 2 |
| Grand Total | 56 |

Tomatin: Local Views

14 Upland Birds

- 14.1 Red grouse were seen as very important for their income generation role in the area but also for their historic and cultural value. Numbers were thought to be increasing.
- 14.2 There was a good knowledge of population trends for all bird species and there was great concern about the decline of many species, including waders. The two biggest drivers of this decline were thought to be sheep ticks and Ravens. Black headed and Lesser black-backed gulls were *thought to be reducing populations of small birds*.
- 14.3 Red grouse were increasing *where there are tick management schemes* and it was thought that the benefits applied to waders and other upland birds as well as grouse. A suggestion was made that these schemes ought to receive some support through SRDP but it was noted that a successful scheme required cooperation between neighbours (for more details see paragraph 26.4).
- 14.4 The inability to obtain a licence to cull Ravens for non-agricultural purposes (through SNH) was a source of great frustration. The gamekeepers were convinced that these birds were having a major impact on hill-top nesting birds but licences for control could not be obtained. The apparent ability of farmers to obtain licences more easily through SGRPID, where Ravens were damaging agricultural interests, served to heighten this frustration.
- 14.5 *Farming changes in the last 50 years* were also identified as having caused a decline in bird numbers. An *incentive scheme to grow spring oats* was seen as a way to help reverse the decline.
- 14.6 There were concerns about an increase in woodland in the area as *fox and tick populations increase with woodland* and it was noted that *waders do not nest near woodland*.
- 14.7 Bird watching was thought to be on the increase and while the additional income was welcomed there were problems associated with *increased disturbance, blocked gateways and gates left open*.
- 14.8 Concerns were expressed about the level of raptor persecution in the area and lack of an occupied Golden Eagle range.
- 14.9 *Predatory birds get too much attention; the fortunes of their prey also need to be considered*. The introduction of a raptor management scheme was seen as a way to achieve a better balance between raptors and their prey.
- 14.10 Deer numbers were much reduced and the relative income from stalking compared with driven grouse shooting was cited as a reason for this. Also, it was thought to be *difficult to keep tick numbers down where deer are also present*.

- 14.11 Geese were seen as an *increasing problem through eating crops and Goosanders and Red-Breasted Merganser were eating fry and damaging fish stocks*.
- 14.12 Pigeon foraging on seed has prevented Oilseed Rape from being grown in the glen.
- 14.13 Some discussion took place about the possibility of expanding the role of wildlife tourism in the economy of the area, but it was noted that the estate sporting management infrastructure would be needed to deliver this.
- 14.14 Additional issues that would help were identified as:
 - 14.14.1 More advice about tick control
 - 14.14.2 Heather beetle activity was thought to be increasing each year and more information would be welcomed.
 - 14.14.3 It was noted that the *Farr windfarm survey work is improving understanding of some issues* but more information would be welcome about bird populations and areas where pressure from Ravens was greatest.
 - 14.14.4 It was suggested that land managers could be asked to monitor and report on bird populations. Suitable training and a financial incentive would be required, but this would provide more data, collected over a longer period of time, it would require less external interference and would give land managers pride in what they were achieving.
 - 14.14.5 A better understanding of rural issues by civil servants and the general public.

15 Carbon

- 15.1 There was a great lack of understanding about the issues associated with carbon management; *we are not sure what to do* was a view commonly expressed. There was scepticism about the carbon message, but the need to *clean up our act* was accepted.
- 15.2 There was thought to be a lack of clear evidence to justify a change of management away from the traditional techniques that had shaped the area and produced the existing store of carbon as peat.
- 15.3 A *need to find ways to benefit from carbon issues* was expressed and it was suggested that a *carbon market needs to be established*.
- 15.4 The problems associated with bare peat were understood and it was not clear whether areas of bare peat were increasing as a result of the activities of deer. It was agreed that bare peat should be re-vegetated but there was a lack of knowledge about the techniques.

- 15.5 Muirburn was seen as an important process to *avoid degradation of the uplands and increasing fuel loads*. Carbon release was thought to be a natural part of burning but more information would be welcome about how it was possible to burn to release less carbon.
- 15.6 A range of suggestions were made about how the carbon management of the uplands could be improved:
- 15.6.1 *Need clear direction, not sound bites.*
- 15.6.2 Better use could be made of hydro-power.
- 15.6.3 Maintain peat areas and reduce the area of bare peat.
- 15.6.4 Use trees to store additional carbon on moorland fringes or in cleuchs although a view was stated that there was *no thirst for more trees*.
- 15.6.5 Tree harvesting techniques need to be developed that release less carbon.
- 15.6.6 Community woodlands should be established to produce wood fuel for local consumption.
- 15.6.7 Local food processing would reduce food miles and carbon emissions from transport.

16 Upland Economics

- 16.1 Red grouse was seen to be the biggest economic driver in the area. Windfarms, hydroelectric, agriculture and deer followed and it was noted that the Tomatin distillery employed 20-25 people. Tourism was thought to be relatively insignificant.
- 16.2 The inward investment by the local estate owners was an important feature and it was noted that *millionaires like windfarms, billionaires don't*. Very few, if any, of the estates produced an annual financial surplus and they were dependent for financial viability on external funding. This view was supported by the report prepared for the Scottish Gamekeepers Association in 2000. Over a three-year period, nine estates in the area were surveyed, covering a total of 110,000 acres, and it was shown that on average the trading accounts of the estates showed a shortfall of about £6 per acre. By comparison, capital expenditure on the nine estates in the period amounted to £3.6m (~£33 per acre).
- 16.3 The community grant from the Farr windfarm was £400,000 with a payment of £40-50,000 p.a. thereafter. There were concerns about how this money was being used to benefit the community.
- 16.4 Commuting to Inverness was possible both for main income earners and also for the spouses of those employed within the Study Area. However, although the railway passed through Tomatin, it was not possible to board trains and therefore it was of no benefit to the area.

- 16.5 It was interesting to note that the introduction of the tick mop approach using sheep to control ticks was thought to have saved the jobs of several shepherds.
- 16.6 The availability of grants was thought to be *restricted by the complexity of SRDP*.
- 16.7 There were some concerns that the area suffered from being just outside the Cairngorms National Park and therefore the area missed the opportunities that were available to those within the Park. This view was countered to some extent by the benefits provided by the inward investment on the estates. There also appeared to be little appetite for change with private money covering costs. In general there was a view that the system *did not need fixing because it was not broken*.
- 16.8 The role of the estates was widely supported but it was stated that *too much attention was paid to the Agencies and NGOs and not enough notice was being taken of landowners*. It was also stated that the Agencies were not working closely enough together.
- 16.9 *The different aspirations of landowners, land managers & community* for the area were commented on and seen as an impediment to a cohesive approach to the management of the area.
- 16.10 Housing was a concern, particularly for young, local people. People moving out of Inverness were buying up local houses and the release of more land for affordable housing was seen as desirable.
- 16.11 Local solutions proposed included:
- 16.11.1 Grouse shooting must continue
 - 16.11.2 Licensing to control raven impacts for game management is needed
 - 16.11.3 Controlling sheep tick numbers was seen as a priority.
 - 16.11.4 Better communication between different estates should be established.
 - 16.11.5 Raise awareness of grant opportunities.
 - 16.11.6 Release of land for local housing would help to drive the economy.
 - 16.11.7 Access to the railway and more use to be made of the proximity to the A9.
 - 16.11.8 Tax relief should be considered for expenditure on top priority issues.
 - 16.11.9 Ease the process for establishing local renewable energy schemes.
 - 16.11.10 More grant support to develop land management skills.

16.11.11 LFASS payments should be restricted to those who are genuinely disadvantaged.

16.11.12 Better use of the community windfarm grant.

17 Feedback from the Community Council

- 17.1 The Strathdearn Community Council at Tomatin queried the views reported from the workshop that tourism in the area was insignificant. Visitors to the Guest House and B&B, who visit the Distillery Visitor Centre, and who stay in the various holiday homes in the area could all be regarded as 'tourists'. Day-trippers also visit the area to picnic, to find deer or view birds etc. The existing level of visitors demonstrates that some tourism interest already exists.
- 17.2 It was suggested that the estates could do more to reduce the net annual costs if they wished to. A recent report published by Savills noted that the average estate income in Scotland was £77/acre compared to £178/acre in England and those estates that diversified into other areas such as renewable energy, leisure and tourism fared better. For example there is only one holiday cottage for rent in the entire glen.
- 17.3 The Council recognises the need to develop closer links with the landowners and land managers.
- 17.4 A Community Planning Study has been carried out and could help the development of the area development plan proposed in this report.
- 17.5 A Housing Needs Assessment and Surgery carried out by Highlands Small Communities Housing Trust supported the concern about the lack of suitable housing reported during the workshop. Also, the shortage suitable housing causes a problem for older people hoping to remain in area after retirement.
- 17.6 The Council could see the benefit of the Forum establishing a Task Force and providing a Dispute Resolution service.

Upland Solutions – the Forum's Proposals

18 Introduction

18.1 This section provides the Forum's initial views of some of the key issues that came from the discussions during the workshops. These views are summarised in the Executive Summary.

19 Area Development Plan

19.1 As a method of identifying where progress might be made, some form of area development plan could be drawn up for the study areas. The plan would allow decision making to take place with reference to other activity in the area, rather than in isolation.

19.2 The plan would act as a focus for all interests and it would be a way of addressing the different aspirations of the different parts of the community. The plan would identify objectives for the area, be it for upland management, biodiversity, local power generation, landscape, community facilities, housing, roads and public transport, tourisms, shops etc.

19.3 The aim would be to give the local community, in the widest sense, a voice that could be used as a vehicle to develop a partnership approach to the management and development of the area involving: the local community, landowners and managers, agencies, NGOs, the local council, other public officials, recreational access users and representatives of private businesses or investors.

19.4 This document could cover high level issues and link to other policy documents or initiatives (e.g. the biosphere proposal in Ayrshire) that cover the area.

19.5 The key attribute of the plan is that it would reflect the aspirations of the community for their local area. Some of the aspirations will not be achievable, but some might be economically beneficial and even self-funding through a link into SRDP.

19.6 Individual landowners might wish to draw up their own plans, based on the area development plan that would provide more detail about how their objectives for the land could be achieved within the umbrella of the area plan.

19.7 It is all too easy to complain about a lack of progress and do nothing about it. This process would provide an opportunity to establish shared objectives for the area and then set out ways to achieve these objectives.

[Back to Exec summary](#)

20 Grouse Shooting

- 20.1 The grouse shooting enterprises in the Tomatin study area were the mainstay of the estates, and a report that had been commissioned by the SGA into the economics of the Upper Findhorn Valley was presented at the Tomatin workshop (Mackenzie, 2000).
- 20.1.1 This report included nine estates that: covered 110,000 acres, provided 47 FTE jobs, maintained 28 houses, had an annual expenditure of £1.03m (~£10 per acre), and created an income of £388,000.
- 20.1.2 The shortfall of income against expenditure amounted to £640,000 (~£6 per acre). This was met from private funds.
- 20.1.3 In addition, in the three years of the study, capital expenditure within the survey area was £3.61m.
- 20.2 Although previously grouse shooting had been important at Muirkirk, driven grouse shooting had declined so that only one gamekeeper remained in the area.
- 20.3 The possibility of re-establishing driven grouse shooting at Muirkirk could be considered; an assessment should be made of the changes that would be required and the associated risks and benefits.

[Back to Exec Summary](#)

21 Ravens and Buzzards

- 21.1 The perceived negative impact of Ravens and Buzzards was common to both areas, although the concerns were most strongly stated at Tomatin.
- 21.2 Recently published research has found only limited evidence to demonstrate serious impacts arising from ravens on ground nesting waders (Amar, A. *et al*, 2010). However, it is understood that the research used data from 1980-93 and 2000-02, which predates the period when these predatory species had achieved extensive ranges and good population status. This may explain the difference with the contemporary perception.
- 21.3 New licensing guidance has been issued by SNH recently in relation to the conservation of wild birds. It is expected that following the implementation of the Wildlife and Natural Environment Act 2011, all species licensing will be dealt with by SNH.
- 21.4 A joint application on behalf of a number of estates from Deeside and Donside for a licence to control ravens for natural heritage protection was unsuccessful in 2010. However, this application has started a process that will lead to a better understanding of the level of information required by SNH if they are to grant a licence.

[Back to Exec Summary](#)

22 Persecution

- 22.1 Concerns about illegal raptor persecution have been expressed in both areas. There are concerns about empty golden eagle ranges in the Tomatin area, the absence of hen harriers, and empty peregrine territories and breeding failures. Although there is now only one full-time gamekeeper employed in the area, at Muirkirk, the concerns remain about the illegal killing of birds, mainly hen harriers and peregrines.
- 22.2 The Strathdearn Community Council at Tomatin is concerned about the area's negative image as a hotspot for raptor persecution amongst wildlife tourism providers and conservationists. They will be keen to see the implementation of the new legislation placing responsibilities on owners and managers.
- 22.3 As part of a development plan for the areas, ways to improve the abundance and productivity of all moorland birds, including raptors, could be investigated.
- 22.4 Measures to improve the knowledge of moorland breeding bird populations could be introduced. Muirkirk has better records than Tomatin, where the level of information is poor. The suggestion that landowners & managers might be able to assist with data collection could be something to be considered further.
- 22.5 There are concerns that rumours about persecution cases abound but hard information is often in short supply. While it is understood that details cannot be released until any police investigation has been completed, the difficulties caused by this delay should be appreciated and efforts made to release accurate information, at the earliest opportunity.
- 22.6 Details of the persecution of any species could be shared through the area development plan process, together with the results of the investigation. The aim would be to provide accurate information about the incident and any action taken.

[Back to Exec Summary](#)

23 Muirkirk – Designation of the SSSI & SPA

- 23.1 The perception was that the upland bird populations had continued to decline in spite of the designation. This perception could be considered for further investigation and include:
- 23.1.1 Improve survey and monitoring efforts to increase data and ascertain population the long-term trends of key species;
 - 23.1.2 The economic and socio/cultural impact of the designation in addition to the environmental / conservation impact;
 - 23.1.3 An assessment of the amount of best practice predator control being carried out;
 - 23.1.4 An assessment of the amount of persecution of raptors and its effect on populations;

23.1.5 The impact of changes to long term habitat management practices (e.g. reduction in grazing pressure and sheep numbers, and the reduction in the amount of muirburn carried out); and

23.1.6 The impact of the large amount of woodland in or close to the study area.

23.2 If bird populations are falling short of expectations, improved guidance to landowners and managers may be required so that the benefits that justify the subsidy payments to landowners can continue.

[Back to Exec Summary](#)

24 Carbon

24.1 It was very clear in both study areas that there was little or no understanding about issues relating to carbon. It appears that the Government's initiatives in this area have yet to filter down to the general public and the land management community.

24.2 It is likely that if some financial benefit from carbon trading or environmental markets could be demonstrated, the level of interest would increase quickly.

24.3 Ways to increase public awareness and understanding of this important issue could be developed. It is unlikely that this problem is confined to these two areas and therefore the Moorland Forum with its national coverage may be able to aid this process.

[Back to Exec Summary](#)

25 Regulation

25.1 What was seen as excessive bureaucracy was a common feature to both areas. Less bureaucracy may not be the answer, but better bureaucracy should be an objective.

25.2 The proposed area development plan may act as a way to view individual issues in a wider context and thus allow decisions to be made that could not be made in isolation.

[Back to Exec Summary](#)

26 Upland management

26.1 There was a general acceptance that good moorland management was a goal for both areas providing better habitat for a range of plant and bird species, more employment and a reduced risk of damaging wildfire. Tomatin is well ahead of Muirkirk in this respect and it was thought that generally habitat management at Tomatin was to a good standard.

- 26.2 At Muirkirk, a management plan for the Special Protection Area (SPA) has been drawn up. The implementation of the management prescriptions under this plan should be monitored to ensure that the aim of improving the condition of the habitat in the area is being achieved.
- 26.3 The best way forward might be for the public and private sectors to engage more closely to help each other. The public sector is all too often seen as the barrier to progress, while the private sector is seen as the perpetrators of bad management.
- 26.4 Sheep ticks provide a risk to human health through Lyme disease, to sheep from louping ill and other tick borne diseases, to grouse from louping ill, and to all upland birds through the pressure of high tick numbers alone, particularly on chicks.
- 26.4.1 The Farr Estate in the Tomatin Study Area has introduced a tick control regime that has produced benefits. See [Appendix 3](#) for details.
- 26.4.2 The Estate has suggested that some financial support to help with the costs of tick control schemes would encourage other estates to introduce similar schemes that would produce the public benefits that have been listed.

[Back to Exec Summary](#)

27 Cohesion and Communications

- 27.1 Muirkirk has 47 active groups within the community, but there appears to be little or no link to the management of the land that surrounds the community. More integration would be beneficial as a means to raise awareness of upland management issues.
- 27.2 At Tomatin, it would be beneficial to establish better communications between the estates and the local community. The Tomatin Country Inn closed during 2010 and the building was demolished; this has not helped communications in the area.
- 27.3 The CADISPA process (see Appendix 4) is addressing cohesion and communication issues and will also be reviewing the allocation of the payment to the community from the Farr windfarm.
- 27.4 An area development plan for the areas could act as a catalyst to bring different parts of the community together.

[Back to Exec Summary](#)

28 Agriculture and Food

- 28.1 The importance of agriculture as a habitat management tool needs to be emphasised but there is also scope to increase the importance of agriculture as a producer of local food and a provider of local employment.

- 28.2 An expansion of agriculture and an increase in the cover of woodland could be considered as part of the proposed development plan for the areas.

[Back to Exec Summary](#)

29 Housing

- 29.1 This issue was raised in both areas. A concern was expressed at Muirkirk that the current planning system was preventing local development meeting the needs of the community.
- 29.2 At Tomatin, it was claimed that the stock of property falling within the reach of young people who want to work in the area was reducing.
- 29.3 It is clear that housing is an issue in both study areas and the reasons for this, with possible solutions, need to be considered.

[Back to Exec Summary](#)

30 Specific Guidance

- 30.1 Knowledge gaps were identified during the workshops; these should be reviewed and efforts made to plug these gaps in the most effective manner:
- 30.1.1 Advice about the introduction of a tick control scheme at Tomatin.
 - 30.1.2 More information about how to manage for heather beetle; to reduce the risk of an outbreak and how to regenerate heather after damage.
 - 30.1.3 How to re-vegetate bare peat.
 - 30.1.4 How to carry out muirburn with a minimum release of carbon.
 - 30.1.5 Better use of available grants
- 30.2 With its access to cross-sector experience the Moorland Forum is well placed to provide missing information.

[Back to Exec Summary](#)

Recommendations

31 Main Recommendations

- 31.1 Further discussion should take place with the communities in the Study Areas to allow the Forum to draw additional conclusions from this work.
- 31.2 If there is support from Forum members to continue the project and adequate resources can be found, the project should be developed further.
- 31.2.1 There are three main options:
- Continue with the existing study areas and develop longer-term relationships with one / both areas.
 - Roll out the work to consider one or more new areas.

- Introduce new areas while continuing with one or both of the original areas.
- 31.3 It will be important to work with other organisations (e.g. Scottish Community Foundation, Development Trusts Association, The CADISPA Trust (Conservation and Development in Sparsely Populated Areas)) to draw on their experience of working with communities that seek to improve themselves.
- 32 Develop a Moorland Forum Task Force**
- 32.1 Consider an alternative approach of developing an Upland Task Force to provide the Forum with the ability to investigate areas (and perhaps issues) where there are conflicts / obstacles / difficulties. These areas / issues could be compared with other areas where solutions have been found.
- 32.2 This role could be seen as providing a dispute resolution service.

References

- Amar, A., Redpath, S., Sim, I., & Buchanan, G. (2010). *Spatial and temporal associations between recovering populations of common raven *Corvus corax* and British upland wader populations*. *Journal of Applied Ecology*. **47**: 253-262
- Lawton, J.H., Brotherton, P.N.M., Brown, V.K., Elphick, C., Fitter, A.H., Forshaw, J., Haddow, R.W., Hilborne, S., Leafe, R.N., Mace, G.M., Southgate, M.P., Sutherland, W.A., Tew, T.E., Varley, J., and Wynne, G.R. (2010) *Making Space for Nature: a review of England's wildlife sites and ecological network*. Report to Defra.
- Scottish Government (2011). *Getting the best from our land: A land use strategy for Scotland*. Scottish Government.
- Scottish Rural Development Council (2010), *Speak Up for Scotland*. Report to the Scottish Government.
- Mackenzie, A.A. (2000). *Rural Economic Survey Upper Findhorn Valley, Invernessshire*. Report commissioned by the Scottish Gamekeepers Association.

Delivery Method

1 Developing the Concept

- 1.1 A Steering Group was formed and this Group identified two Study Areas at Muirkirk and south-west of Tomatin. These areas were selected using the criteria set out in paragraph 3 below. Maps of the Study Areas are shown at Appendix 2. Although these maps show a boundary to the area, this was interpreted loosely.
- 1.2 The Steering Group identified the three key strands that were to be considered: Upland Birds, Carbon, & Upland Economics.
- 1.3 Three Strand Teams were established under three Chairmen to investigate each of the strands in the two Study Areas.
- 1.4 Five key issues to be considered for each of the three strands in both Study Areas were drawn up by the Strand Team Chairmen.

2 Management of the Project

- 2.1 The Steering Group had the following members: Doug McAdam (SRPBA - Chairman), Andrew Coupar (SNH), Adam Smith (GWCT), Tony Waterhouse (SAC), Robert Balfour (ADMG), Duncan Orr-Ewing (RSPB).
- 2.2 Strand Team chairmen were appointed: Andrew Wallace (ASFB - Upland Birds), Will Boyd-Wallis (CNPA – Carbon) and Tony Waterhouse (SAC – Upland Economics).
- 2.3 Simon Thorp (Heather Trust, MF Secretary) handled the administration of the project, organised the workshops with Alison Young (MF Administrator) and wrote the Report.
- 2.4 After the initial set up phase was complete, a group formed from the Steering Group Chairman, the three Strand Chairmen and the Secretary was found to be the most effective decision making group.

3 Study Area Identification Factors

- 3.1 Mixed land use reflecting the three strands
- 3.2 Scale – not too large with boundaries that could be defined.
- 3.3 Willing participation by local people
- 3.4 Ability to incorporate existing initiatives
- 3.5 The availability of baseline information
- 3.6 The comparable areas to be representative of the issues, not geography.

4 Strand Teams

- 4.1 To keep numbers on each team at a working level, numbers were restricted to about 6 people and membership was by invitation.
- 4.2 Other members of the Forum were attached to the Strand Teams and their input was encouraged by correspondence. Membership of the Teams is recorded in Supplement 2.

5 Information Gathering

- 5.1 Two workshops were held that were open to everyone to attend. The aim was to get the support from a cross-section of people in each of the Study Areas.
- 5.2 This process was backed up by making direct contact with people in the area to ensure that the information gathering process reached as wide an audience as possible.

6 Promotion

- 6.1 Letters were sent to key landowners and managers within or close to the Study Areas. A flyer for each workshop was prepared and member organisations, and local community organisations were asked to circulate details to their constituents. Press releases were issued and flyers were sent to known contacts in or close to the Study Areas. The flyer produced for the Muirkirk event is available at Supplement 7.
- 6.2 Lord Lindsay wrote to key agencies and organisations to ask for their support with data collection and the promotion of the project.

7 Questions

- 7.1 The Strand Teams developed a series of questions that were used to gather information from people in each Study Area.
- 7.2 It was agreed that questions would be posed in two forms: strand questions to be completed individually and / or discussed in small groups during the workshops, and an individual questionnaire that people attending the workshops would be asked to complete on their own. The Individual Questionnaires were also circulated to people who were unable to attend the workshops but had expressed an interest in the project.

8 Data Analysis

- 8.1 After the workshops, the information on the group forms and the individual questionnaires was collated onto two spreadsheets. This was a subjective process and it was accepted that this might lead to bias. However, the aim of the project was to gather general views not to do scientific analysis of the results.
- 8.2 The information was further condensed to combine the input from the two forms of questions and the issues that this process highlighted were then used to draft the final report.

9 Report and Feedback

- 9.1 It was agreed that a combined report would be produced, covering both Study Areas, so that issues that were common to both areas could be addressed. However, there would be separate sections for each of the Study Areas.
- 9.2 The draft report was circulated to those who had attended, or had shown an interest in, the workshops to allow them to comment on the findings. The report was adjusted to take account of this feedback and this final version will be circulated widely following final adoption by the Forum.

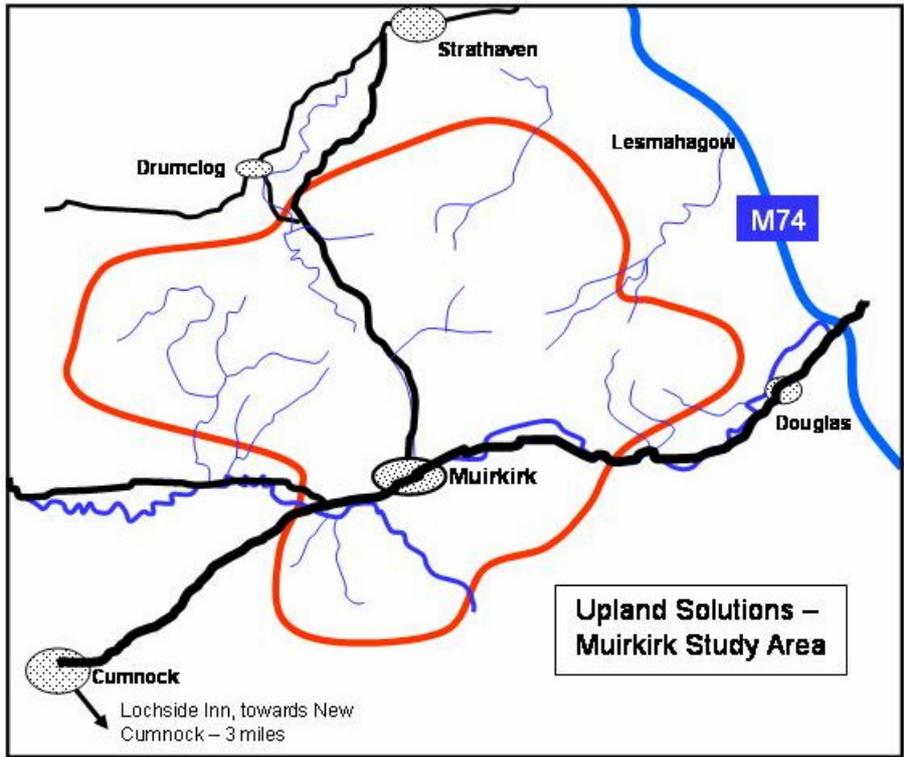
[Back to link](#)

Study Area Maps

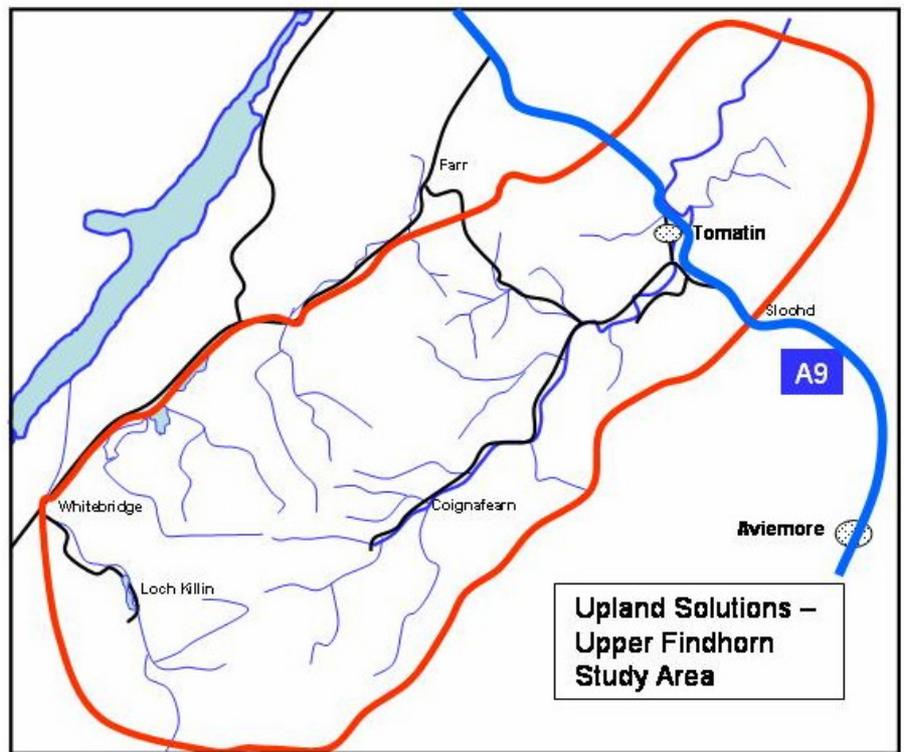


Study Areas in relation to each other

[Back to link](#)



[Back to link](#)



[Back to link](#)

Tick Control

10 Background

- 10.1 Farr Estate had been suffering from high tick numbers. Five years ago more than 150 ticks were being found on each stag / hind shot but this has now dropped to about 10. In the same period Red Grouse numbers increased from 80 brace in 2005 to 1,500 brace in 2009. If a brace of driven grouse is charged at £120, the economic benefit of the increase in grouse numbers is obvious.
- 10.2 However the cost of the process can be prohibitive and it has been suggested that some support should be available within the Scottish Rural Development Programme to encourage more people to take up this option. The wider benefit is that all upland birds gain from the reduction in the number of ticks; it is not just grouse.

11 Tick Control Technique

- 11.1 The technique involves the treatment of a sheep flock with an acaricide, which is picked up by biting ticks and is fatal to them. This is the so-called tick mop technique. The main acaricides are in the form of a pour-on treatment; *Dysect* or *Crovect*. are the trade names of commonly used acaricides. Regular treatments are required (about 6-8 weeks apart) depending on the level of infection.
- 11.2 The additional costs are associated with the extra gathers of the sheep and the cost of the tick control acaricide.

12 Costs breakdown

- 12.1 It is assumed that there is an existing sheep flock and it is only the additional costs associated with tick control that are considered here.
- 12.2 The Farr Estate has kindly provided their figures based on an 800 sheep flock and these are quoted below:

| | |
|---|--------|
| Dysect per gather | £500 |
| Additional shepherds per gather | £400 |
| Additional cost of each gather | £900 |
| Allow for 6 gathers p.a., therefore annual cost | £5,400 |

- 12.3 There is no return on this additional cost for the first four to five years, until the benefits of reduced tick numbers begin to be seen in increased grouse numbers.
- 12.4 Farr Estate has suggested that an incentive of say, £2,500 for the first five years would encourage larger numbers of landowners to follow this route. This would boost the income into the area, provide greater incentive for inward investment and achieve significant benefits for all species of upland birds.

[Back to link](#)

Other Initiatives

1 The CADISPA Trust

- 1.1 The Strathdearn Community Council at Tomatin has engaged [The CADISPA Trust](#) (Conservation and Development in Sparsely Populated Areas) to produce a report on the area.
- 1.2 The two reports have been produced without reference to each other and the amount of synergy between the two documents is striking.
- 1.3 On the website, the Trust identifies two objectives that sit well with the Upland Solutions project:
 - 1.3.1 The Trust works directly with local people to enable them to become as informed and as powerful as their professional neighbours, and to choose a mandate of development options for their community that they know will make their community more sustainable and improve quality of life opportunities.
 - 1.3.2 CADISPA seeks to ensure that local development sits within the 'triangle of sustainability' and asks local development groups to address environmental, social and economic factors in any project they pursue – helping them find a definition of 'sustainable development' that has meaning and resonance to them.
- 1.4 The CADISPA Report was presented to the Community Council on 3rd March 2011 and the work has now entered an implementation phase. The Moorland Forum is maintaining contact with CADISPA and the Community Council and has offered to assist the further progress of this initiative.

2 Regulatory Review Group – Pilot Project at Powharnal

- 2.1 The Regulatory Review Group (RRG) is an independent, business-led advisory committee that provides advice, guidance and challenge to the Scottish Government.
- 2.2 The Group established a pilot scheme to review the effectiveness of recent planning legislation at community engagement level and in particular about pre-application consultation.
- 2.3 The scheme focused on the proposed replacement of the opencast coal mine at Powharnal, close to Muirkirk, and therefore the work had good geographical linkage to Upland Solutions. The role of the RRG was to act as a facilitator for three public meetings.
- 2.4 The Upland Solutions project may be able to draw some relevant conclusions from the findings of this report which included:

- 2.4.1 The benefit from the ability to clearly identify the wishes of the local community and provide a better understanding of the challenges facing a development.
 - 2.4.2 The benefit arising from the community having early involvement in multi stakeholder discussions.
 - 2.4.3 The meetings that took place laid the foundations for a constructive on-going relationship between all the parties involved and allowed these parties to freely air their concerns in a non confrontational environment.
 - 2.4.4 An independent chairman to facilitate discussion and progress was seen to be a key feature of the success of the project. There was agreement that the objectives may not have been achieved without such a constructive, focussed and skilful chairman to keep things on track and avoid time wasting.
 - 2.4.5 Hosting the meetings in the area directly involved was very important.
 - 2.4.6 It is very unlikely that the advantages of the meetings and resulting dialogue would have happened in the format in which it did without external intervention.
- 2.5 The full report can be [downloaded](#) from the Scottish government's website.

[Back to link](#)